

# **Influences of mentoring on retention and socialization of new employees in the construction sector through knowledge transfer**

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## **Abstract**

Introducing new employees into the organization, thereby establishing the organizational culture and values is an often under estimated tool for improving organizational effectiveness and efficiency, especially in a diverse work-force context such as South Africa. The business world has long known and relied upon mentoring as a proven technique for developing in house talent, mentoring is experiencing resurgence because business leaders not only recognize the benefits of transferring knowledge among employees. The main objective of the literature review is that the study will describes better practices that organizations can use to address the threat of lost knowledge caused by changing workforce demographics, to investigate the dual nature of the effects of mentoring relationships through knowledge transfer. Furthermore to evaluate the impact of mentoring on retention of employees within organizations. The study was mainly a literature review, qualitative with a special focus on the influences of mentoring on socialization and retention of new employees within organizations. The data used in the report was mainly qualitative, based on the content analysis, and historical data. The findings reveal mentoring is an integral part of socialization process and is crucial for socializing new employees into the organization. Mentoring is amongst others a training and development tool to assist individuals in the upward progression in companies. Mentoring is also a mechanism by which employees are equipped to adapt to organizational change. The study indicated knowledge transfer assists employees in improving their skill sets which increases their marketability and the potential for them to pursue career opportunities elsewhere. In addition mentoring relationships can assist organizations in addressing this challenge. On average the individual who had been mentored reported high levels of knowledge transfer, were more likely to report higher turnover intentions. The early success of the initiatives described provide useful lessons for the construction industry and executives who recognize that knowledge retention, socialization and mentoring of new employees are critical for sustaining future organizational performance. In addition to this, mentoring relationships may assist organizations in simultaneously promoting effective knowledge transfer and commitment that assist in the retention of key knowledge workers. Future research in this area is recommended to better understand how mentoring relationships may benefit organizations. **Keywords** Socialization; Mentoring; Graduates Employees; Retention; Skills development; Construction.

## **1. Literature Review**

### **1.1 Introduction**

New employees are the asset of the organization so there is need to commit the employees with the organization. Organizations today face a dilemma regarding the retention of key knowledge workers. Knowledge transfer amongst employees is crucial for organizational productivity. Turnover is a critical human resource issue in all sectors of the economy. Turnover affects productivity, product and service quality, and profitability. The cost of replacing workers is high, finding skilled employees can be difficult, and investments in training are less secure. Unexpected workforce attrition may place employers at a serious disadvantage. And this turnover could occur when slimmed-down companies have little redundancy in job roles, exposing them to greater risk of losing important organizational knowledge. To minimize the impact of workforce turnover, companies need a proactive strategy for knowledge retention and transfer. Regardless of economic conditions, employee turnover happens. The financial impact of workforce mobility is well documented. The Society for Human Resource Management found that direct replacement costs can reach as high as 50% to 60% of an employee's annual salary. The total costs of replacement, including training and the loss of productivity, can range from 90% to 200% of an employee's annual salary (Allen, 2008). To flourish in a company, a new employee has to know what elements embrace the rules, values, mores, culture, and expectations of the organization. If not properly grounded in these realities, the new employee can feel out of place, unaccepted, and on the margin, whether real or imagined, which can lead to discouragement and resignation or dismissal.

Joining a company as a new employee, certainly, results in a degree of "culture shock" that can be very confusing if not mitigated through mentoring and orientation strategies that are intended to draw the individual out in order to add value to them as an employee and, subsequently, to the organization. In high-turnover businesses this even more serious because putting the process ahead of the individual will so often lead to discouraging to the point where they resign or are dismissed from the position which costs the company a great deal of money in terms of having to recruit and train a completely new individual employee. Turnover-related costs examined by the Saratoga Institute represented more than 12% of pre-tax income for the average company. As the rate of turnover increases, so does the cost per employee. For companies with greater than average voluntary attrition, turnover costs were equivalent to nearly 40% of company earnings (Saratoga, 2007). While these figures do include the costs to train a new employee, they overlook the value of the organizational knowledge lost when employees leave. That value is difficult to quantify, yet organizational knowledge is fundamental to every company. When employees leave, they take a major competitive advantage with them. The increased number of job changes shortens the life cycle of an employee, putting companies at greater risk of organizational knowledge loss.

The notion of a more-experienced individual providing knowledge and support to someone who is less-experienced has been in existence since Homer wrote his epic poem, *The Odyssey*. Mentoring is considered to be the oldest form of knowledge transfer (Stephenson, 1998). This requires organizations and researchers to focus more closely on processes such as mentoring that can support effective knowledge transfer and retention of critical knowledge workers. Organizations that rely upon effective knowledge transfer to sustain a competitive advantage face a dilemma. If such organizations do not have processes to promote effective knowledge transfer, productivity will suffer and organizational survival may be threatened (Szulanski et al., 2004). Conversely, if organizations do invest in knowledge transfer they risk increasing the marketability and job mobility of their employees which could potentially harm retention (Rousseau & Shperling, 2004). Job mobility has increased in past decades because similarities in processes and technology mean that knowledge is less idiosyncratic to a particular organization and thus is more transferable (Rousseau & Shperling, 2004). To be effective, organizations must establish processes that promote knowledge transfer while simultaneously fostering a commitment to the organization that supports retention (Rousseau & Shperling, 2004).

### **2. Design/Methodology**

The study was mainly a literature review, qualitative with a special focus on the impact of mentoring on retention of employees within organizations. The data used in the report was mainly qualitative, based on the content analysis, and historical data

### **3. The Importance of Worker Retention and Knowledge Transfer**

When a business loses employees, it loses skills, experience and “corporate memory”. The magnitude and nature of these losses is a critical management issue, affecting productivity, profitability, and product and service quality. For employees, high turnover can negatively affect employment relationships, morale and workplace safety. The cost of replacing workers can be high, the problems associated with finding and training new employees can be considerable, and the specific workplace-acquired skills and knowledge people walk away with can take years to replace. The problem of turnover can be addressed through a variety of pro-active retention strategies: workplace policies and practices which increase employee commitment and loyalty. Knowledge transfer initiatives on the other hand, ensure that the knowledge and expertise of a company’s employees—its ‘corporate memory’—are systematically and effectively shared among employees. They can offset the negative impact of turnover, but can also work pro-actively to reduce turnover by providing learning and skills development opportunities to employees - factors known to reduce turnover. (Nkomo & Thwala, 2014).

Employee retention and knowledge transfer are two elements of a more general concern that might be best termed ‘skills management,’—i.e., everything that has to do with recruiting, maintaining and developing *the necessary mix and levels of skill required* to achieve organizational and business objectives (Lothead & Stephens, 2004) .

### **3. Literature Review Findings**

#### **3.1 The dual nature of the effects of mentoring relationships through knowledge transfer**

Mentoring programs in organizations can be helpful in improving performance and transferring knowledge, and lead to higher job satisfaction and retention of employees, resulting in higher business productivity. (Mustafa and Erdil, 2012) conducted a research in Malaysia to examine the relationships between self- efficacy, work engagement and job satisfaction. In accord with this aim, general self-efficacy scale, work engagement scale and Minnesota job satisfaction scale were applied to a sample of financial advisors in the survey. The relationships between self-efficacy, work engagement and job satisfaction were investigated using correlation and regression analyses. The associations sought were hypothesized in the research model. Self-efficacy theory is a tactic of mentoring. The findings illuminated that both self-efficacy and work engagement affect job satisfaction.

In the workplace, relationships naturally develop between co-workers, clients, supervisors, and subordinates. Relationships at work can be both productive and unproductive, filled with animosity or admiration, and can foster friendships that go beyond the workplace lasting long into other careers and employers. One type of relationship that can be very beneficial in the workplace, even advancing an individual’s career, is the mentoring relationship. The mentoring relationship between a mentor - a more experienced employee - and mentee can provide both parties benefits offering support and knowledge in performing a job, increased admiration in the office, and navigating the politics of an organization. The benefits usually relate to an increase in performance. This relationship, although usually positive, is not without some pitfalls and risks. A mentoring relationship can sometimes develop into a negative situation with a mentor possibly sabotaging a mentee or not providing the necessary career support (Piasecki, 2011).

The relationship an employee has with his/her peers, colleagues and company has a significant impact on knowledge retention and transfer. A positive relationship facilitates knowledge sharing during all phases of an employee’s life cycle; a negative relationship or lack of a relationship can impede knowledge sharing, especially at the point of exit. The effect of mentoring relationship through knowledge transfer is that Knowledge retention and transfer is an area that holds great potential for companies in terms of reducing the costs associated with turnover, and perhaps more important, in sustaining business performance.

Mentoring relationships in the workplace may assist organizations in addressing this dilemma. One aspect of mentoring relationships is the passing of knowledge from a more-experienced individual, i.e., the mentor, to a less-experienced individual, i.e., the protégé (Kram, 1985). Research in this area suggests that providing skill-building opportunities to protégés is positively related to personal learning in the workplace (Lankau, & Scandura, 2002). Yet, an unintended consequence of knowledge transfer via mentoring is the potential for increased job mobility for protégés and the resulting negative effect on organizational retention efforts (Ramaswami & Dreher, 2007). A second aspect of mentoring relationships is the personal support that a mentor may provide in order to enhance a protégé’s sense of competence and effectiveness (Kram, 1985). Recent findings from a longitudinal study suggest that mentoring fosters organizational retention in part because the emotional bond established between a mentor and a protégé may contribute to higher levels of organizational commitment (Payne, & Huffman, 2005). (Rabiya and Srivasatava, 2012) investigate the mentoring relationship with employee engagement on sales professionals. Organizations look at ways to create a positive work environment where employees can look at continuous growth and expansion of knowledge. This to a larger extent has been achieved by mentoring programs which have not only enabled employees to plan their career growth but have also provided them with psychological support and an

anchor. The study involved surveying a sample of 170 sales / marketing professionals at different levels in the organizational hierarchy from Mumbai region. It was found that there was a significant difference in the employee engagement scores of respondents who were a part of mentoring relationship. Thus, indicating that organizations who plan to invest their resources in establishing a mentoring program will see a significant effect on the employee engagement levels of their workforce.

Mentoring relationships may operate, thus, through a dual pathway to impact organizational retention by assisting in the transfer of organizational knowledge while simultaneously developing the high-quality interpersonal relationships that strengthen a protégé's commitment to an organization.

Having dedicated the time and resources to contest for talent, the next step that HR practitioners face is to get new employees quickly up to speed in the organization.

Retaining new entry employees, however, poses a challenge, as most turnover occurs during the first few months on the job (*Chao et al., 1994*). Because organizations have little opportunity to retrieve the return on investment in new employees who abandon their work, new entry of employees, turnover is problematic and is therefore a concern of researchers and practitioners similar. While there is an expanded interest in predicting newcomer turnover at the selection process, research on this topic has generally focused on organizational socialization and how it is used to familiarize new employees with new roles and to retain these new organizational employees. Socialization is generally defined as "a process in which an individual acquires the attitudes, behaviors and knowledge needed to successfully partake as an organizational employee (*Van Maanen & Schein, 1979*). Socialization is an ongoing process that sometimes lasts for a year. It represents a sense-making process that helps new employees adjust, form work relationships and find their place in the organization. A typical socialization process includes three phases (*Noe, 2005*). *Anticipatory socialization*: This stage occurs before new employees join the organization. Through interacting with representatives of the company (for example, recruiters, managers), new employees develop expectations about the company and the job prior to organizational entry.

- ✦ *Encounter*: When new employees begin a new job, they start to learn about job tasks and receive training. Managers can exert their influence by helping new employees understand their roles and duties. Also, by understanding the stresses and issues that new entry employees experience, managers can help cultivate a high-quality work relationship with newcomers.

- ✦ *Settling in*: New employees begin to feel comfortable with their job demands and social relationships. They will be interested in the company's evaluation of their performance and in learning about potential career opportunities within the company.

Socialization is the term of the study to know about the personalities, attitudes and behaviors of the new employees. Socialization mainly emphasizes on the personal aspects of a new employee that is, getting to know the people, that how much they are competent towards their work and how much they have ability to face the difficulties (*Shafi., et al 2013*). Induction is a dimension of socialization which mainly focuses on the procedural accepts of the employee. We can say that it is a directorial program for their employees because if the employees have any problem related to their work and facing problems to find out the right direction then this problem can be solved through induction process. Both of the aspects are focusing on employee work and the organization strategic goals and induction is creating a link between these two accepts so that employee engagement will be easier to achieve. (*MacLeod and Clarke, 2009*) For achieving these goals we need to our employees to be engaged towards their work and this would be possible through socialization process. This causes to increase the employee engagement in the organization (*MacLeod and Clarke, 2009*)

Regardless of the years of work experience that new employees have, knowing the technical and social aspects specific to the job and the company is essential to function in a new environment.

#### **4. Discussion of Findings**

##### **The impact of mentoring on retention of employees within organizations.**

Though viewed as a key aspect of mentoring (*Stephenson, 1998*), knowledge transfer has been primarily examined at the interfirm level (*Szulanski, 1996*), at the interdepartmental level (*Berta & Baker, 2004*), and at the team level (*Gibson et al., 2007*). (*Grover & Davenport, 2001*), suggest that much research on knowledge transfer has a more macro focus, examining the transfer of knowledge between and within organizations. Knowledge management articles highlight knowledge transfer as a key mechanism for organizational success, yet a gap exists between practice (*Buckman, 1998*) and formal research (*Grover & Davenport, 2001*). A key emphasis of research in knowledge transfer should be on the contribution of individuals to the process (*Grover & Davenport, 2001*). Little research in the knowledge management literature, however, has explicitly tested mentoring as a means by which knowledge is transferred among individual's employees. Mentoring involves a formal or informal developmental partnership where employees receive information, advice, and guidance from an experienced professional, usually

within the organization, who has expertise and a strong desire to help others grow in their jobs. Mentoring encompasses coaching, sharing perspectives, and transferring knowledge and wisdom to the mentee(s). The mentor is not a supervisor but a person with whom the employee can communicate freely and honestly without concern about being evaluated. Knowledge transfer is defined as an exchange of organizational knowledge between a source and a recipient (Grover & Davenport, 2001) in which the exchange consists of information and advice about resources and relationships (Szulanski, 1996). A primary mode of knowledge transfer is the direct sharing of knowledge between individuals (Grover & Davenport, 2001) such as mentors and protégés. Knowledge is defined as a framework derived from one's experience, expert insight, and contextual information and it assists in the evaluation and integration of new experiences and information (Grover & Davenport, 2001).

#### **4.1 Mentoring saves money, retains workers, builds leadership, and growth talent**

Mentoring contributes to employee growth and tenure. In the long run, a well-organized and managed program can save the company thousands of rands.

- **Reduced turnover and recruiting costs.** Mentoring relationships can help retain talented people because they have a stronger commitment to the organization (Jacka and Quinn, 2010). Talent remains much less likely to leave if they feel supported in their work and made aware, for example, of new opportunities that their mentor suggests. It's not unusual for organizations to hear that their strong mentoring program attracted new talent.
- **Assistance in transferring knowledge from the retiring workforce to new workers.** Many mentoring relationships help younger employees learn from those who will retire soon. Pairing junior staff with more senior staff can reinvigorate the enthusiasm of senior employees as they transfer crucial knowledge to the next generation of workers. This reduces the loss of the tacit knowledge from seasoned veterans leaving the workforce.

#### **4.2 Performance**

The purpose of knowledge transfer is to pass information from the more-experienced to the less-experienced employees so that the less-experienced employees can build the capabilities needed to assume future roles in the organization (DeLong, 2004). Although mentoring research has focused on career-related outcomes that are important to protégés, there is a need to explicitly examine the mechanisms by which mentoring influences outcomes. Research at both the organizational and individual level of analysis appears to support the notion that knowledge transfer mediates the relationship between mentoring and performance. (Kowtha & Tan, (2008), found that knowledge of the organization and profession mediated the relationship between career-related mentoring and the ability to perform. They suggested that task mastery is achieved by the transfer of tacit knowledge through interpersonal interaction. In addition, receipt of mentoring functions was related to the perceived positive influence on one's job performance. Based on these studies, one may infer that mentoring will positively impact a protégé's job performance through knowledge transfer.

#### **4.3 Retention**

As an outcome of mentoring relationships in workplace settings, retention is of interest in this study because of its importance to organizational performance. For decades, management researchers have emphasized the importance of retaining talented employees through research on turnover. If organizations invest in talented employees through increases in their knowledge, the knowledge transferred to these employees is lost if they leave the organization, and the invest made to them. While recognizing that there will always be some voluntary turnover in an organization, retention rates should be somewhat high so that experienced workers are available to share their organizational knowledge with newcomers in the organization and to use their expertise to directly benefit their organization. Thus, in the knowledge economy, it is important to look at issues of retention (Mitchell et al., 2001). Organizations face significant challenges in retaining valued employees because of the changes in the employment relationship that promote greater job mobility. Traditional research has focused on the influence of job satisfaction on voluntary turnover (Mitchell & Lee, 2001). While the implication of such research is that workers dissatisfied with their jobs will leave and those satisfied with their jobs will remain, researchers suggest that this view is too simplistic and narrow in explaining what influences turnover and retention (Mitchell & Lee, 2001). Mentoring is a type of workplace relationship that may assist in promoting the retention of knowledge and talented knowledge workers. Protégés who reported receiving mentoring were more likely to indicate that they did not have plans to leave their organization to go and work in another organization.

### **5. Best practices in retention and knowledge transfer**

In order to address the threat of lost knowledge caused by changing workforce demographics. The heart of any knowledge-retention strategy is its knowledge-sharing practices. There are many sorts of methods that contribute to

knowledge capture, sharing and re-application: after-action reviews, communities of practice, face-to-face meetings, mentoring programs, expert referral services, training, video conferencing, interviews, written reports, etc. While many of these practices are helpful for creating a general knowledge-sharing environment, the question remains which ones are most useful for addressing knowledge-retention problems?

A review of the HR literature suggests that sources on HR retention can be grouped into the following categories: “How To” articles, books and presentation materials on employee retention. By far the most numerous, these sources tend to be highly prescriptive without delving too deeply into specific details about how to implement retention measures.

- Case studies of particular companies that primarily relate what a particular establishment has done with little or no reference to more general sources within the HR literature.
- Works that focus more intensively and exhaustively on specific retention areas. The literature on compensation and benefits systems, for example, is quite considerable.
- A comparatively small body of academic and business literature in which various research methodologies are used in an attempt to link particular HR initiatives to measurable performance outputs such as productivity, worker turnover, etc.

Based on the review of the literature, the list of retention practices that captures the main types of interventions discussed in the HR literature. They are as follows (Lochead & Stephens, 2004):

**Competitive and Fair Compensation** is a fundamental starting point in most strategies to attract and retain employees. However, there is general agreement that compensation levels do not single-handedly guarantee employee retention. Common best practices include the use of industry surveys to benchmark and position wage and salary structures to be fair and competitive.

**Adequate and Flexible Benefits** can demonstrate to employees that a company is supportive and fair, and there is evidence to suggest that benefits are at the top of the list of reasons why employees choose to stay with their employer or to join the company in the first place. Many companies are responding to the increasingly diverse needs of their employees by introducing a greater element of choice in the range of benefits from which their workers can choose. Flexibility in benefits packages can enhance retention, as it creates responsiveness to the specific needs and circumstances of individual employees.

**Recognition and Rewards** include a diverse range of formal and informal, financial and non-financial, incentives given to individual employees, groups of employees or to an entire staff. They include such things as employee of the month awards, company-sponsored sports teams and social events, prizes, clothing, and so on. Recognition and rewards can contribute to a workplace culture of respect and appreciation for employees and work well done, and thereby reinforce employee commitment to the firm.

**Training, Professional Development, and Career Planning** are effective ways to enhance employee retention. Training constitutes a visible investment that the company makes in the worker, providing him or her with new skills, and greater competencies and confidence. Training often leads to work that is more intrinsically rewarding. Combined with effective communication about how an employee's efforts at developing skills will lead him or her to more challenging and meaningful positions *within* the company, training encourages workers to make longer term commitments to their workplace: it permits them to see a future with the company. *All* of the companies we interviewed were very active in the area of skills training and professional development. Many have put in place effective internal promotion programs that allow even their unskilled and semi-skilled workforce to move towards positions of greater responsibility and remuneration within the company.

**Performance Appraisal** practices that provide good feedback to employees and give them a view of their longer-term progress within the company — particularly in terms of training and career development opportunities — are important ways of enhancing employee commitment.

**Knowledge Transfer** – cross-training, coaching and mentoring, phased in retirement.

While employee retention practices seek to retain *workers*, knowledge transfer practices seek to retain *skills*, through both formal and informal exercises in information sharing and the building of collective knowledge. Mentoring and coaching, phased-in retirements, and cross training and job rotation, are types of knowledge transfer that overlap with training. Knowledge transfer also includes the use of technology based tools databases, intranets, groupware aimed to support knowledge sharing among individuals, and to permanently document and keep knowledge that is vital to business performance

## **5. Conclusion**

Retaining organizational knowledge in the face of changing workforce demographics is a complex challenge that requires simultaneously confronting the problems created by an aging workforce, a shrinking talent pool and increasingly restless employees. The threats posed by changing demographics were not created in a year and will not be solved overnight. The most effective knowledge retention strategies will require a multifaceted approach and a long-term commitment on both the leadership of an organization and the employees. Because knowledge is a key resource today, a more systematic understanding of how knowledge is shared and transferred in organizations is needed in order for organizations to be able to better manage it. Organizations must understand the types of processes that facilitate effective knowledge transfer between individual employees, while simultaneously retaining knowledge in the organization so it can benefit the organization and employees. This study is one of the few empirical research efforts to shed light on this process. Results of this study suggest that a focus on mentoring simply as a vehicle to promote knowledge sharing may harm an organization as the more talented employees may “jump ship.” Attention must also be given to understanding the mentoring behavior’s that foster a protégé’s affective commitment so as to mitigate the potentially negative effect of knowledge transfer on retention.

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## **Biography**

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